

March 30, 2006

OPENING STATEMENT

BEFORE

THE HOUSE VETERANS' AFFAIRS SUBCOMMITTEE

ON

DISABILITY ASSISTANCE AND MEMORIAL AFFAIRS

BY

GENERAL FREDERICK M. FRANKS, JR.
U.S. ARMY (RETIRED)

CHAIRMAN

AMERICAN BATTLE MONUMENTS COMMISSION

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before this Subcommittee on behalf of the American Battle Monuments Commission.

As Chairman, it is my duty and honor to oversee Commission policies to ensure that we, as a Nation, continue to honor appropriately the service, achievements, and sacrifices of our American Armed Forces where they fought.

Since its creation in 1923, the Commission has served as the guardian of America's overseas commemorative cemeteries and memorials. We are committed to preserving for future generations the twenty-four permanent memorial cemeteries and twenty-five monuments, memorials, and markers around the world that honor America's War Dead, Missing in Action, and those who fought at their side.

Our inspiration comes from words written more than 70 years ago by our first Chairman, General of the Armies John J. Pershing, who promised that "time will not dim the glory of their deeds." Last year we conducted a transformational review of our vision and strategy. Remaining faithful to Pershing's promise and, with a view to the future, we have focused our energies and resources toward accomplishing four strategic goals:

- To develop, operate, maintain, and improve the Commission's facilities as the world's best commemorative sites;
- To value and invest in each employee;
- To have the Commission's commemorative sites recognized worldwide as inspirational and educational visitor destinations; and
- To make the Commission's business and resource management the best in government.

The Commission's fiscal year 2007 appropriation request for \$40.738 million supports these goals and continues our commitment to our worldwide mission and responsibilities. We remain dedicated to preserving our commemorative cemeteries, monuments, memorials, and markers in a manner befitting the achievements and sacrifices of America's Armed Forces.

We do this in memory of those whose sacrifice, in wars past, our commemorative sites honor, and in respect for the courageous men and women of our Armed Forces today who willingly follow in their footsteps, fighting for our own freedom and the freedom of others, the most noble of missions.

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, in keeping with our third strategic goal of having these worldwide shrines to our fellow Americans recognized as educational and inspirational visitor destinations, we invite you to visit our commemorative sites as you travel abroad on Subcommittee business, to see for yourselves the commitment our Nation has made—and continues to make through you the Members of Congress—toward maintaining our sacred trust to America's War Dead and to their families. And, we ask that you encourage your constituents to do likewise.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This concludes my opening statement.

With your permission, I would now like to introduce the Commission's Secretary, Brigadier General John W. Nicholson, U.S. Army (Retired), who will continue with our testimony.